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VOID RIVALS
image
#14

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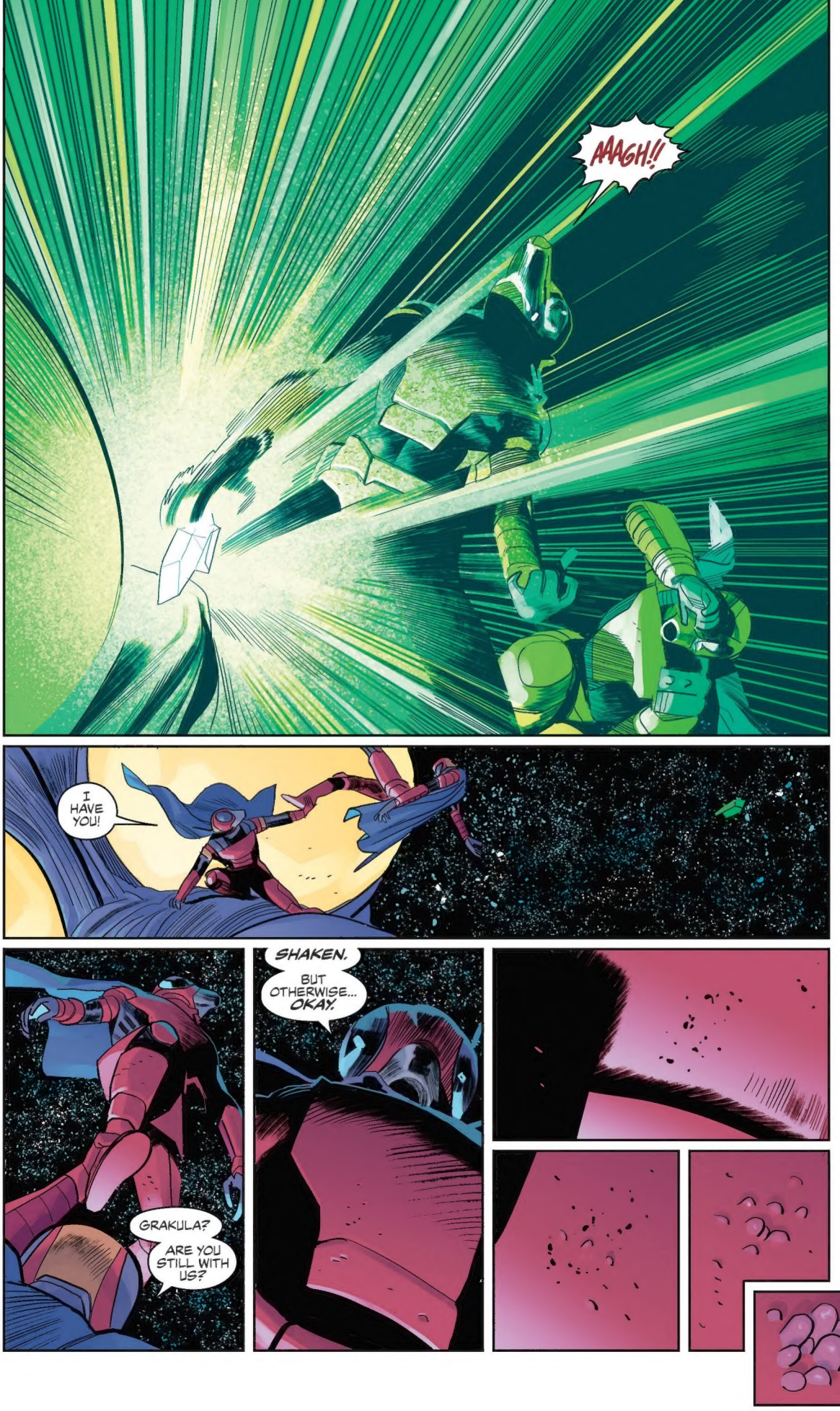
DO YOU ACCEPT?
"FIRST CHOSEN OF THE EMBRACE OF ZERTA."
A PATHETIC JOKE.
DO YOU NOW RECOGNIZE THE FOLLY IN THAT CLAIM? ZERTA HAS NO MORE CHOSEN YOU THAN ANY OTHER OF OUR KIND.
DO YOU DENOUNCE YOUR FORMER WAYS TO FINALLY WALK THE PATH OF THE LIGHT?
MY METHODS HAVE FAILED AND LED ME ONLY TO A PATH OF DESPAIR AND RUIN.
IF YOU ARE WILLING, I AM OPEN TO LEARNING YOUR WAYS.
RISE, PREMIERE ZALILAK, PRETENDER TO THE THRONE OF ZERTONIA.
RISE INTO THE LIGHT OF YOUR FUTURE, WHICH BY THE GRACE OF ZERTA IS NOW BRIGHT AND FULL OF HOPE.

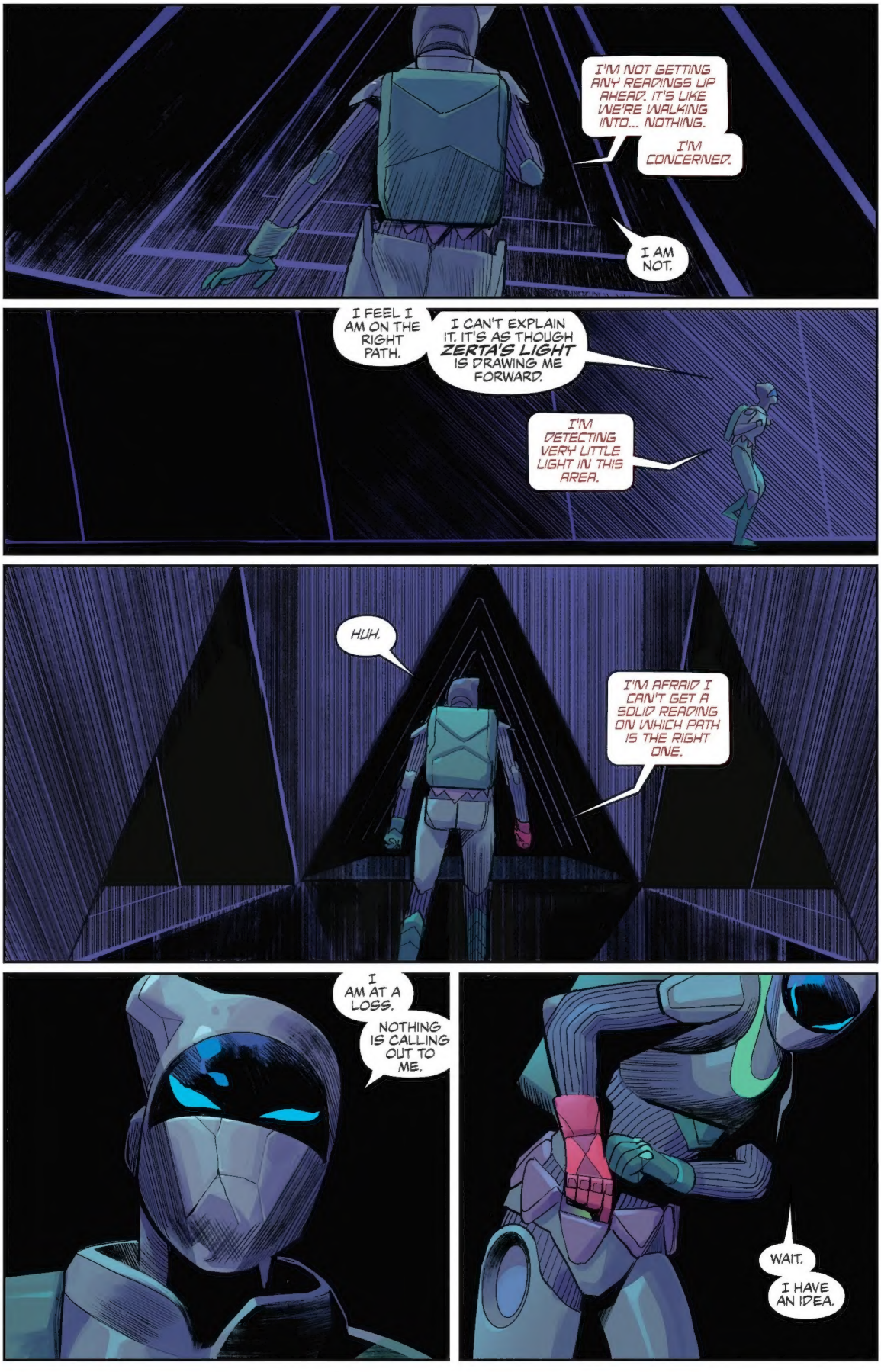
AGORRIA.
I DON'T... UNDERSTAND.
UNITY BRINGS GOLIANT...
GOLIANT BRINGS ABOUT... THE END.
WHAT IS GOLIANT?
I AM SORRY, DARAK.

I HAVE A GREAT MANY REGRETS IN MY LIFE. CHIEF AMONG THEM, THAT I DID NOT SHARE WITH YOU THE GREAT BURDEN THAT MY FATHER SHARED WITH ME.
IT IS OUR LEGACY, PASSED DOWN FOR GENERATIONS.
I TOLD MYSELF, YOU WERE NOT... WORTHY, NOT YET, BUT THAT ONE DAY YOU WOULD BE. I SEE NOW THAT THIS BRED THE RESENTMENT I HELD FOR YOU.
FOR THAT, I AM SORRY.
MINISTER DULIN!
I TOLD YOU WE WERE NOT TO BE DISTURBED!
AN OBJECT HAS BEEN DETECTED APPROACHING THE SACRED RING!
THE VELOCITY INDICATES A DELIBERATE APPROACH. IT MAY BE A VESSEL OF ALIEN ORIGIN.
WE WILL CONTINUE THIS CONVERSATION AT ANOTHER TIME.
I'M GOING WITH YOU.
...
VERY WELL.

DEEP SPACE.
:SIGH.:
WHAT AM I DOING?
I'VE GOT A WIFE AND KIDS TO PROVIDE FOR!

UNCHARTED SPACE.
VIPRIA, STATUS?
WE LOST THE SIGNAL... BUT WE THINK WE FOUND WHY. THERE WAS A COLLISION WITH SOME COSMIC DEBRIS. A PIECE HAS LODGED NEAR OUR LEVIATHAN'S EYE.
BOLA AND GRAKULA ARE WORKING TO REMOVE IT. IT APPEARS TO BE EMITTING A RADIATION THAT IS INTERFERING WITH OUR SENSES.
ARE YOU SURE OUR ARMOR CAN HANDLE THIS ENVIRONMENT?
BOLA, PLEASE. OUR SECOND SKIN THRIVES ON THE RADIATION FROM EARTH'S SUN. IF ANYTHING, WE'RE FURTHER FROM THE STARS IN THIS SECTOR OF SPACE.
MY ARMOR HAS MORE THAN ENOUGH ENERGY TO WARM MY BODY AND GIVE ME AIR TO BREATHE.
WELL, I STILL DON'T LIKE IT OUT HERE.
ALMOST THERE. I'LL BE AS QUICK AS I CAN.
I HAVE IT WITHIN MY GRASP.
JUST... A LITTLE... MORE...


AAAGH!!
I HAVE YOU!
GRAKULA?
ARE YOU STILL WITH US?
SHAKEN.
BUT OTHERWISE... OKAY.

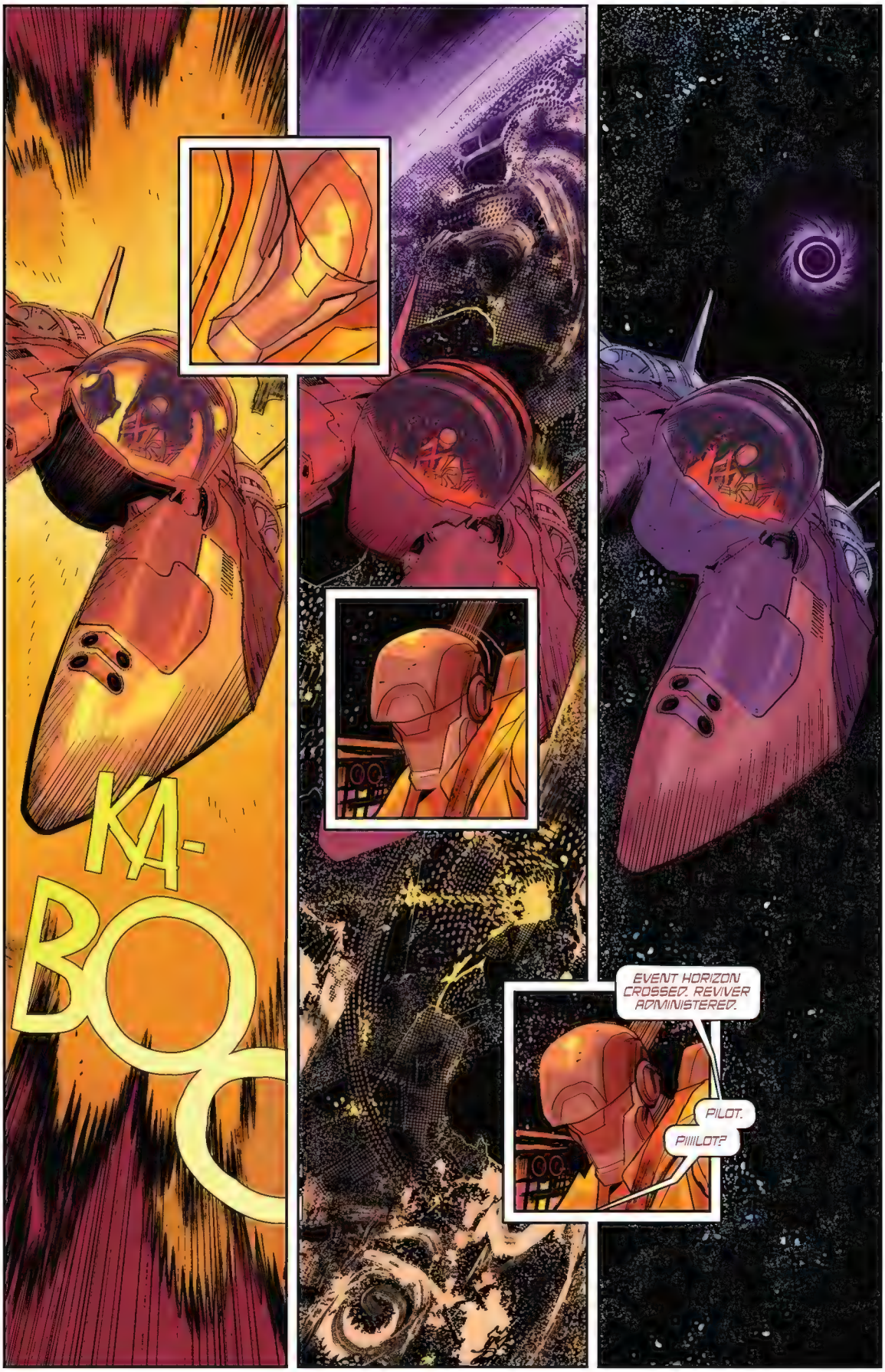

I'M NOT GETTING ANY READINGS UP AHEAD. IT'S LIKE WE'RE WALKING INTO... NOTHING.
I'M CONCERNED.
I AM NOT.
I FEEL I AM ON THE RIGHT PATH.
I CAN'T EXPLAIN IT. IT'S AS THOUGH ZERTA'S LIGHT IS DRAWING ME FORWARD.
I'M DETECTING VERY LITTLE LIGHT IN THIS AREA.
HUH.
I'M AFRAID I CAN'T GET A SOLID READING ON WHICH PATH IS THE RIGHT ONE.
I AM AT A LOSS.
NOTHING IS CALLING OUT TO ME.
WAIT.
I HAVE AN IDEA.

OKAY THEN.
THAT THING SEEMS HANDY.
WHATEVER IT IS...

DIRECTOR ELANDER, REPORT!
THE OBJECT IS MOVING AT A DELIBERATE VELOCITY. IT'S CLEARLY USING A SOURCE OF PROPULSION.
WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S HEADED STRAIGHT FOR US.
IT COULD BE A NEW ZERTONIAN WEAPON.
SCRAMBLE JUMP JETS. ORDER THEM TO SHOOT ON SIGHT.
IT'S NOT A ZERTONIAN WEAPON.
I WAS JUST THERE. THEY DON'T HAVE THE RESOURCES FOR THAT KIND OF THING. TRUST ME.
YOU HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING THAT!
WE CAN'T SEND PILOTS OUT THERE TO ATTACK WHATEVER THIS IS. IT COULD BE ANYTHING.
SEND ME.
NO. YOU JUST RETURNED FROM A FAILED MISSION. WE HAVE MORE PRESSING MATTERS TO ATTEND TO.
ALL THE MORE REASON NOT TO START A NEW WAR WITH A POTENTIAL ALLY!

THAT WAS EASIER THAN I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE.
YOUR FATHER IS WISE. MORE THAN WISE ENOUGH TO OVERRIDE HIS MORE STUBBORN SIDE.
YOU APPEAR DUE FOR A NEW HELMET.
NO WAY I'M FLYING WITHOUT MY LUCKY HELMET, DIRECTOR.
WELL, IT APPEARS YOU'LL STILL NEED A NEW HANDROID. WAS YOURS--
LOST. LONG STORY.
I'LL HEAR IT ANOTHER TIME.
CHOOSE QUICKLY, DARAK.
GREETINGS, PILOT.
I WILL BE YOUR HANDROID FOR THIS MISSION.
WEIRD.

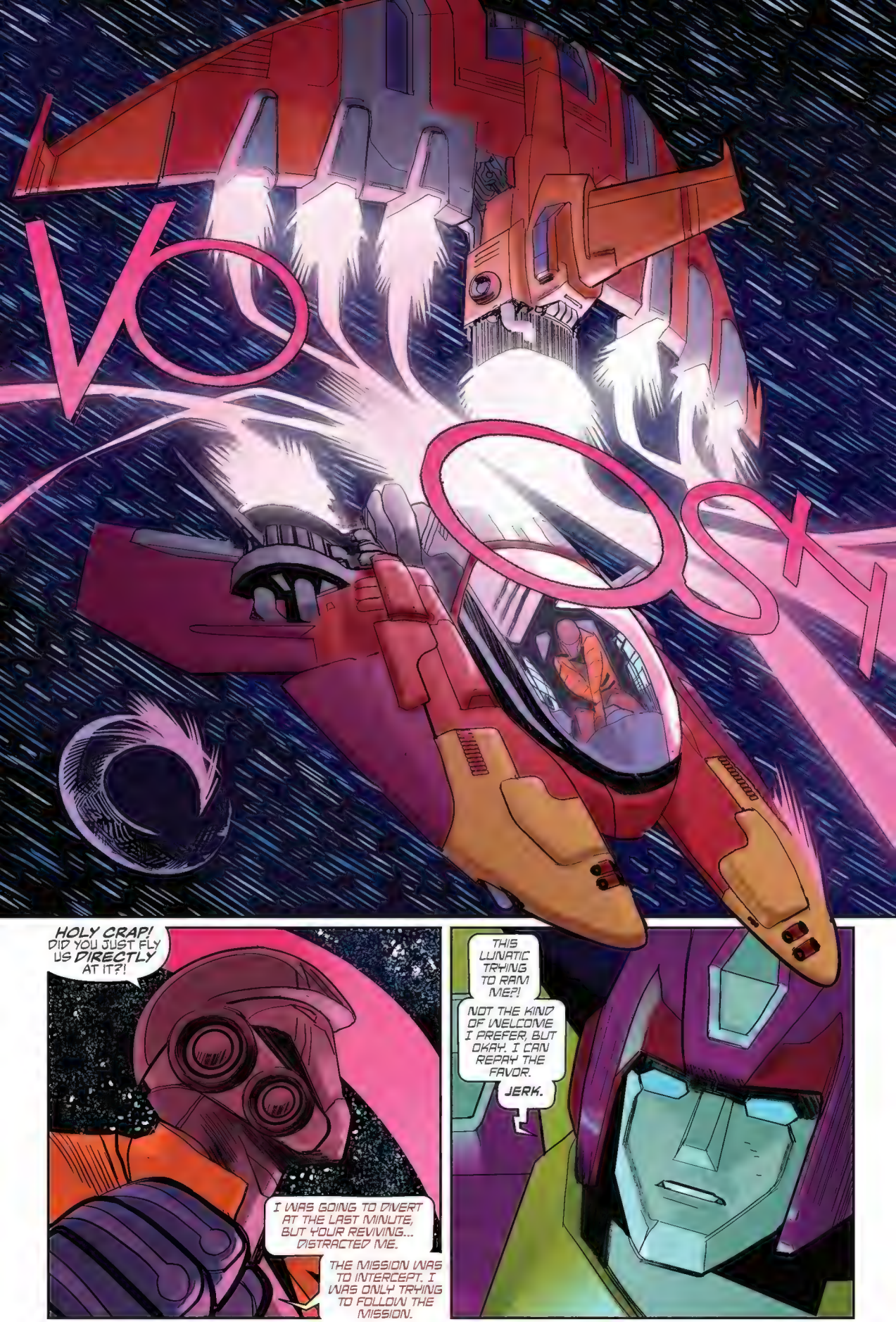
WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S NOT ZERTONIAN. THEY DON'T HAVE THE RESOURCES TO HAVE A RANDOM STAR WING FLYING WITHOUT A SET DIRECTIVE.
THEY'RE CERTAINLY IN NO POSITION TO LAUNCH AN ATTACK.
WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S HEADED STRAIGHT FOR US. IT'S STILL TOO FAR AWAY TO DETERMINE WHICH SIDE OF THE RING ITS HEADED FOR.
YOU'LL HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO INTERCEPT ONCE YOU REVIVE.
HOPEFULLY... THIS IS A SHORTER TRIP THAN MY LAST MISSION...
HOWEVER LONG IT TAKES, I KNOW IT WILL BE A SUCCESS.
LIGHTSPEED TO YOU, DARAK.
SYSTEM CHECK COMPLETE.
HANDROID, THIS MISSION IS HIGH-PRIORITY. REVIVE ME THE INSTANT WE CROSS... THE EVENT... HORIZON.
CERTAINLY. I AIM TO PLEASE, PILOT.
IGNITION.
LAUNCH INITIATED.


KA-
BOOM
EVENT HORIZON CROSSED. REVIVER ADMINISTERED.
PILOT.
PIIIILOT?

PILOT?
NOT THIS AGAIN.
DARAK?
SOLILA?! WELL...
THIS IS NEW.
WHAT HAPPENED? HOW ARE YOU HERE? HOW AM I HERE?! WHAT'S GOING ON?
I JUST LAUNCHED IN A JUMP JET, LIKE BEFORE.
IS THIS SOME KIND OF VISION? ARE YOU REALLY YOU?
YES!
I WAS TRAVERSING THE INNER RING WITH YOUR STUPID CHATTY GLOVE MOMENTS AGO-- AND SUDDENLY I'M HERE.
WHATEVER.
YOU LOVE HANDROID.
...
IT HAS BEEN... SOMETIMES PREFERRED TO SILENCE.

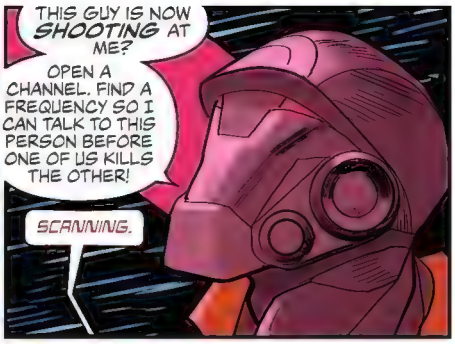
SOLILA?
SOLILA?
SO, NO CREEPY VISION FROM YOUR FAKE CYBERTRONIAN GOD?
YOU WOULD DO WELL TO NOT INSULT ZERTA. THIS CONNECTION IS MOST CERTAINLY HER DOING.
I AM AS CERTAIN OF THAT AS I AM THAT THERE IS A PURPOSE TO IT.
OKAY THEN. PURPOSE.
CHECK IN. WHAT'S YOUR STATUS? I ASSUME YOU HAVEN'T FOUND ZERTA YET?
I HAVE NOT.
HAVE YOU LOCATED KANELA'S CONTACT ON YOUR SIDE AND GIVEN THEM THE DATA PACKET?
I HAVE NOT.
IT WAS CONFISCATED WHEN I WAS BROUGHT IN AND... NO ONE EVER ASKED ME ABOUT IT.
UH. THAT'S ODD.
MORON. THAT PROBABLY MEANS WHOEVER INSPECTED YOUR BELONGINGS KNEW EXACTLY WHAT IT WAS AND WAS ABLE TO CONCEAL IT BEFORE THE AGORRIANS LEARNED OF IT.
I WAS PUTTING THAT TOGETHER MYSELF. PROMISE.
AND... NOT NICE.

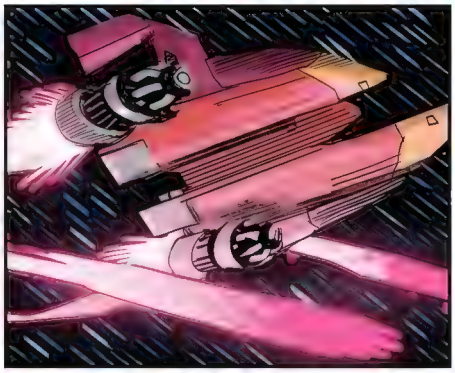
EVEN IN GHOST FORM, YOU'RE KIND OF A--
OH!
I ALSO DISCOVERED THAT OUR HIGHEST RANKING OFFICIALS ARE NOT ONLY AWARE OF THE FACT THAT WE'RE THE SAME--THEY'RE ALSO COLLUDING WITH EACH OTHER TO KEEP US APART.
WHAT?!
THAT'S THE KIND OF THING YOU LEAD WI--
I'M--
I'M BACK.
BACK?
WHERE WERE YOU?
=GAH!=
I PROMISE I DID EVERYTHING I POSSIBLY COULD TO REVIVE YOU.
YOU'VE BEEN OUT FOR QUITE A BIT LONGER THAN--

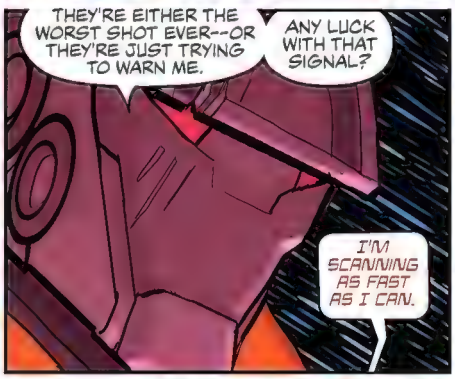

VOOSH

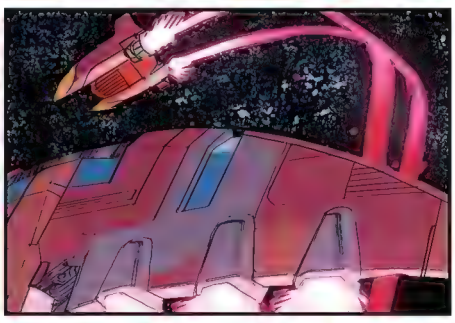
HOLY CRAP! DID YOU JUST FLY US DIRECTLY AT IT?!
I WAS GOING TO DIVERT AT THE LAST MINUTE, BUT YOUR REVIVING... DISTRACTED ME.
THE MISSION WAS TO INTERCEPT. I WAS ONLY TRYING TO FOLLOW THE MISSION.

THIS LUNATIC TRYING TO RAM ME?!
NOT THE KIND OF WELCOME I PREFER, BUT OKAY. I CAN REPAY THE FAVOR.
JERK.

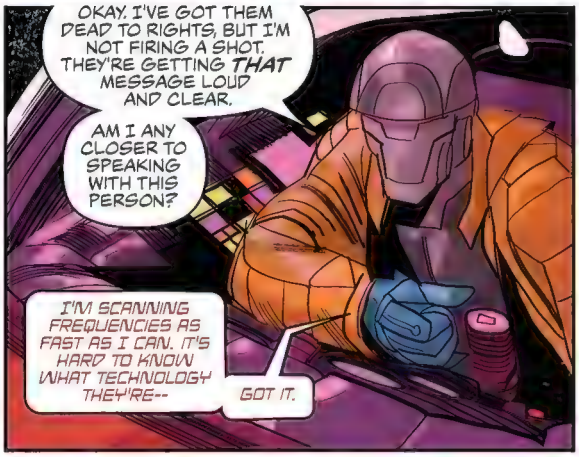

THIS GUY IS NOW SHOOTING AT ME?
OPEN A CHANNEL. FIND A FREQUENCY SO I CAN TALK TO THIS PERSON BEFORE ONE OF US KILLS THE OTHER!
SCANNING.




THEY'RE EITHER THE WORST SHOT EVER--OR THEY'RE JUST TRYING TO WARN ME.
ANY LUCK WITH THAT SIGNAL?
I'M SCANNING AS FAST AS I CAN.

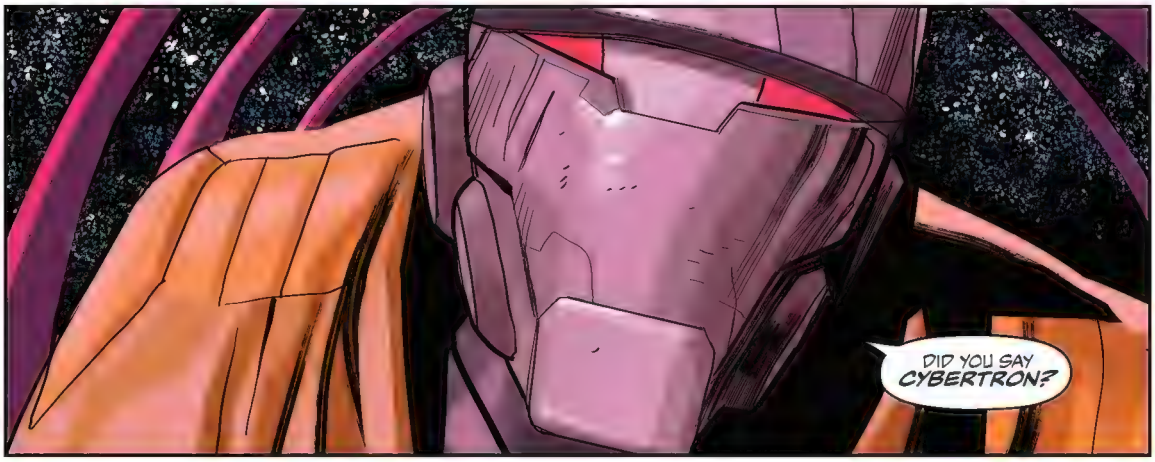


COMING AROUND. I'M GOING TO SEND MY OWN SIGNAL.
WEAPONS DOWN.

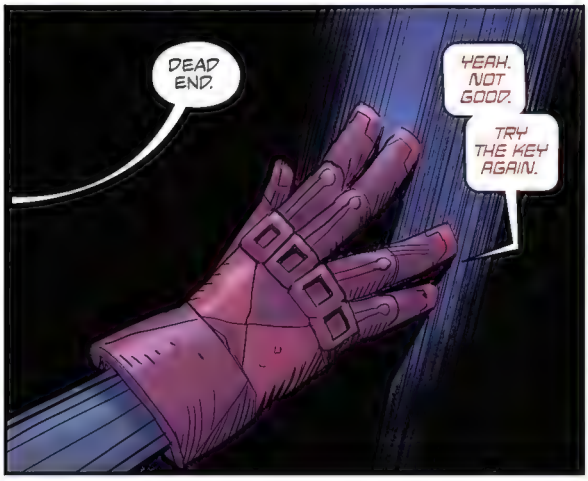

OKAY. I'VE GOT THEM DEAD TO RIGHTS, BUT I'M NOT FIRING A SHOT. THEY'RE GETTING THAT MESSAGE LOUD AND CLEAR.
AM I ANY CLOSER TO SPEAKING WITH THIS PERSON?
I'M SCANNING FREQUENCIES AS FAST AS I CAN. IT'S HARD TO KNOW WHAT TECHNOLOGY THEY'RE--
GOT IT.

UNKNOWN VESSEL. I AM DARAK OF AGORRIA. I'M SORRY FOR THAT CLOSE CALL BACK THERE. IT WAS DUE TO A... MALFUNCTION.
I ASSURE YOU WE MEAN YOU NO HARM.

GREAT!
PLEASE EXCUSE THE WARNING SHOTS BACK THERE. YOU JUST... NEVER KNOW WHO YOU'RE DEALING WITH OUT HERE.
OH, AND I'M HOT ROD OF CYBERTRON. I ALSO DON'T MEAN YOU OR YOUR PEOPLE ANY HARM.
I'M... LOOKING FOR A FRIEND OF MINE.


DID YOU SAY CYBERTRON?

IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE TO ME EITHER.
ZERTA WANTED US TO SPEAK, SO WE SPOKE. THAT'S ENOUGH FOR ME.
FASCINATING.


DEAD END.
YEAH. NOT GOOD.
TRY THE KEY AGAIN.

THE FLOOR APPEARS TO BE--
BAD IDEA!
BAD IDEA! PUT THE KEY AWAY!

HUH.

IT'S NO MYTH.
THE FABLED RING OF ZER--SHE WHO WILL NOT BE NAMED... EXISTS.
AT LONG LAST... WE QUINTESSONS WILL HAVE OUR REVENGE!

TALK TO THE HANDROID

SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO VOIDRIVALS@SKYBOUND.COM

Welcome back to another scintillating installment of TALK TO THE HANDROID! Editor and co-host Ben Abernathy here to once again check the mailbag with the handsome and mysterious Robert Kirkman!

I gotta be honest, I don't think I'm either of those things, Ben! But thanks, the check is in the mail! Who's having a good time? Boy, we are! Energon Universe! Woo! And holy crap, Hot Rod is in this series again? Who's excited about that. Maybe, just maybe, he'll run into Springer next issue. Hot Rod and Springer together?! Won't that be insane? SOOOOO much going on in this book.

Including letters! Let's answer some of those, shall we?

. . . . . .

Dear Handroid,

I wonder. How do you feel about it all? Issue 12's lettercol claims you were betrayed but...I'm wondering how do you feel about everything in this Energon Universe overall? I'm not sure how I feel about it myself! I stopped getting the G.I. Joe related mini-series (Cobra Commander, Destro, Scarlett, Duke) BEFORE they all ended. Why? I didn't feel any connection to the characters. I also stopped getting the regular G.I. JOE ARAH for the same reason. Plus, I stopped getting Transformers. Why? I felt like I saw it all in the movies. How about Void Rivals? Well, I made it to Issue 12 and I plan to continue with it. The cameo appearances of Jetfire and Springer were interesting (not sure if I'd call Springer's appearances as cameos...he's like a regular supporting character now). Even though I have NO IDEA who they are, their characterizations kept me informed as to their personalities. However, what's REALLY keeping me interested in this book is the relationship between Darak and Solila and their differences and similarities. I am so curious to see what will happen between their two worlds. I hated to see them separated at the end of #12, but I'm hoping to see them together in the end, with you Handroid.

Alan Bowman
Sagamihara City, Japan

Thank for you reading, Alan, and writing in. Sorry to hear that our other Energon Universe offerings weren't to your liking but thrilled you've stuck with VOID RIVALS.

I know it might be a little confusing, but Larry Hama's GI JOE: REAL AMERICAN HERO is NOT a part of the Energon Universe. That's a continuation of the continuity Larry established in the '80s way back when Marvel Comics was publishing the debut of that series. We were very careful to make sure the Energon Universe was distinct enough to separate them.

If all those books weren't your cup of tea, we totally get it. We're making sure each book can stand on its own, so you'll never be lost only reading VOID RIVALS. I do think you should check out Joshua Williamson and Tom Reilly's Energon Universe G.I. JOE series. It may be to your liking. Anyway, thanks for reading!

. . . . . .

I f**king love everything you're doing with Energon. Everything.

Talk to Alan!

The Transformers third season tertiary character stuff especially. You've restored my faith in comic books. This new universe feels…vast, unexplored, mysterious.

Q from Trek TNG sums it up nicely;

"It's not safe out here. It's wondrous, with treasures to satiate desires both subtle and gross. But it's not for the timid."

-Q

Keep making magic.

-Scott

Thanks for the passionate vote of confidence, Scott. I'm proud to say

that even now, well over a year into the Energon Universe, we've only just seen the tip of the iceberg. There's SO much cool stuff coming that I wish I could tell you about…wait'll you see what we're doing in Arc Four of VOID RIVALS haha!

Q quote! You win! Love it!

And yes, Ben speaks the truth. So many far-reaching plans at work here. Ooooh boy! And more obscure Transformers Season 3 stuff lies ahead, just you wait!

. . . . . .

Hey Handroid!

First off, I want to shout out all the supremely talented folks working on the Energon Universe. Every title has been so well crafted and always adding to its personal story as well as the grander mythos. I unfortunately don't have the space to shout everyone out individually, but you should all be proud of what you and your peers are building

This is actually my first time writing in to a letters column after almost 35 years reading comics; this title is so good I just had to write in. I'll try to keep it short but sweet (and include questions, like all good letters haha).

Thanks for writing to us first, Niko, Handroid is honored!

I absolutely love what Robert, Lorenzo and Patricio are crafting. I've been hooked since day one. Every character has so much depth and I enjoy every interaction the characters have with each other. The visuals crafted by Lorenzo and Patricio make every character immediately leap off the page. Every little detail, down to the logo graphic design and corner cover box, are firing on all cylinders.

Hell yeah they are! Andres Juarez for the win!

The EU as a whole has proven that IP can be used in smart, meaningful ways and doesn't have to be just an attention-grabbing wrapper on less meaningful work. As a creative myself, I know how hard it can be to translate your intention into the thing that gets into people's hands; and to have them experience it as you intend is a shot in the dark. But to have all this positive feedback must be a dream! I look forward to the EU continuing as long as it can.

On to the questions!

1 - For Lorenzo! Do you work mostly digital, as I assume Patricio does, or are there traditional comic pages for VR? If so, and you can promote that here, where can we get some of your original work?

From Italy, Lorenzo reports in:

Hey Niko, unfortunately my work on VR is all digital. If any of that changes you'll hear all about it on my social media, like instagram.com/lore_de_fe . Thanks for summoning me with this question, I missed being on the mail page. Hey everybody! Stay out of trouble!

2 - Any updates on Solila and Darak figures? Maybe our own wearable Handroid toy or Solila and Darak's helmets? Hopefully when the figures do happen they'll capture Lorenzo's style and Patricio's colours while maintaining lots of articulation (something like a Figma)!

That is all in Hasbro's court. As much as we'd all love to see it, we're going to be patiently waiting (and praying) for it right along with you guys.

In the end it wasn't very short, but I tried to convey the joy this book (and the EU) brings me; no easy feat! It takes properties I love and somehow adds to it and makes me love them more! I have not read a single panel, page or book I did not enjoy--which is hard to say these days! Pass this love on to the rest of the EU team!

Thanks!

Niko
Niagara Falls, Canada

Thank you for the kind, thoughtful, and enthusiastic letter! The team will really appreciate your commitment in and continuing interest in the series <3

Yes, thank you so much, Niko! I love these worlds with a deep passion and have for as long as I can remember. So getting to play in this sandbox and actually add to it is an immense joy for me. Honestly, this is a huge, high water mark for my entire career. The coolest thing is everyone on the Energon Universe books feels the same way, we're really giving our all to this universe. So to you and anyone out there reading this, thank you so much for all your support!

. . . . . .

And that's a wrap for this month's TALK TO THE HANDROID…please keep the letters coming and see you next month!

-Ben

I can't wait for you all to see what we have coming up in the next few issues. It's going to be GREAT!

-Robert

ROBERT KIRKMAN LORENZO DE FELICI PATRICIO DELPECHE
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